



GROUNDCOVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

February 2015 VOLUME 6 ISSUE 2

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Resignation or reconciliation – where do we go from here?



by Susan Beckett
Publisher

In these days of mass shootings, racial profiling and political polarization, it is easy to either demonize those whose actions we abhor, or to get discouraged, walk away from the struggle and get lost in the plethora of entertainment choices that abound. Yet some choose another path – that of moving forward by refusing to be enemies.

Nearly 10 years ago, 12 local women – six Arab and six Jewish – formed a social group they called Zeitouna with the intention of bridging the divide and increasing their understanding of “the other.” Over shared meals, they shared their personal stories of losing their homes, surviving the Holocaust and feeling like an outsider.

Two years later, one of the founders, filmmaker Laurie White, started videotaping the sessions so they could share their methodology and reconciliations with the world. The resulting movie, *Refusing to Be Enemies – The Zeitouna Story*, was recently shown again as one of the 2015 University of Michigan Martin Luther King, Jr. Symposium events.

The words of the third verse of “Beneath the Tree,” a song in the movie, sum up the Palestinian conundrum thusly: “One people say, ‘This is our home. We’ve been here all along; we did not roam. Besides, we did not cause your pain, so why should we lose while you gain?’ Whose nation shall it be that dwells beneath this tree?”

Early in the movie, local lawyer Dick Soble observes, “What turns most people off from trying is that the problem seems too overwhelming. What Zeitouna has done is show us that there are first steps. They don’t solve the problem, but they get people in motion.”

And as they start interacting under the guidance of a facilitator, the women of Zeitouna learn about each other and about the process in which they are engaged. Among the revelations: that

labeling creates “otherness” and dialogue dissolves it. But with the dissolution of the adversarial relationship comes the risk of the loss of identity.

It takes courage to step into the unknown – letting go or facing up to an emotion or position that has defined you – but it is an essential step to growth.

Our local community has partaken in a similar exercise in the past couple of years with the dialogues on race, albeit on a much more limited basis. As people from many backgrounds shared their experiences, they felt each other’s pain, saw through each other’s eyes, and grew in empathy for each other.

This year’s U-M symposium keynote speaker, Dr. Marc Lamont Hill, underscored the importance of listening to each other. He observed that in this age of “I-ness” where everyone is the star of their own personal reality show, the cacophony of voices can be mistaken for conversation. Hill posited that listening is an ethical commitment, allowing that another might have something valuable to say that could change your thinking. He also decried the fact that some voices have been muted and called on us to share the mic.

Another symposium speaker – graffiti artist and creativity consultant Eik Wahl – warned, “Unless we transform our pain, we will transmit it.”

The Max Rayne Hand in Hand Bilingual Schools in Israel are another example of people choosing the path of rapprochement. Rather than sending their children to a Jewish school, where they are taught in Hebrew from a Jewish perspective, or to an Arab school, where the children are taught in Arabic from a Palestinian perspective, these parents chose a school composed of Arab and Jewish children who are taught in both languages both the struggle for a Jewish homeland and the struggle for Palestinian rights. The school motto is: “We refuse to be enemies.”

The Hand in Hand school in Jerusalem was torched on November 30, 2014 as Israeli tempers flared in the face of missile attacks from Gaza and the killing of three kidnapped Israeli teens, followed by the killing of a Palestinian boy. Instead of giving up, the parents called a meeting and consoled each other.

On March 21 at 8 p.m., St. Claire’s Episcopal Church and Temple Beth Emeth are hosting “Society Together – Multicultural Education and Peacemaking in Israel,” featuring Lee Gordon, cofounder of Hand in Hand Schools. This community event is open to the public. Consider attending this presentation or a future dialogue opportunity. Perhaps by refusing to be enemies we can work together to stop the madness into which it seems our world is descending.

GROUNDCOVER

MISSION:

Creating opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

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How then shall we celebrate?



by Rev. Dr. Martha Brunell
Groundcover Contributor

In the hustle and bustle of the 2014 December holidays, I learned something fresh about the word “celebrate.” Its historic roots lie in the verb “to practice.” One of the words used to name a worship or ritual leader in many faith or spiritual communities is the word “celebrant.”

As a younger adult, I figured out that in my emotionally touch-and-go childhood I had learned about the rhythms of worship and ritual at my September birthday parties. Growing up, my family was often unreliable. However, I did enjoy wonderful home-grown birthday parties. In those annual events I began to explore being a celebrant.

Years later, I realized that many of my friends had little feeling for celebration and were tempted to turn to some expert for guidance or permission around how they should celebrate. That always made me sad. For the seeds of

celebration – what we feel is important to practice and make more fully our own – lie inside each of us. Patterns of celebration remind us of what is sacred, special or life-giving – even ordinary gestures, habits, traditions and events.

For me, writing this column is one of my monthly recurring celebrations. When I sit down at the keyboard, I practice my love of writing, my commitment to being part of a diverse community working on an important issue and the challenge of shaping a message of meaning for a broad, seen and unseen community that calls itself Groundcover.

When I was in elementary school I had two yearly celebrations involving green growing things. First, there was an abundance of geraniums around our house in the short summers of my upstate New York youth. Geraniums didn’t make it through the long, harsh winters that followed. Sometime later in October, I would haul a geranium to school. It lived on one of the wide window sills of that year’s classroom. All winter long I would watch it thrive on its sunny sill, challenging the white world outside the window. Then, on the last day of school, sometime well into June, I would come to school proudly bearing a rose from our garden for my

teacher. My hand was protected and the rose was kept moist with a layer of wet paper towel encased in aluminum foil at the bottom of the rose’s stem. Looking back, I suspect I was practicing both my love of learning and the growth it promised.

Celebrations enrich the political and social issues that we hold important. Throughout the 1980s during the Nuclear Freeze Movement, some of us lingered on the sixth of each month to be particularly mindful of our dangerous world and our responsibilities to address that. The sixth was chosen because it was on August 6, 1945 that the first atomic bomb devastated Hiroshima. This was a practice of remembrance.

I love to celebrate Dr. Seuss’s birthday on March 2, by organizing a collection of children’s books. Literacy for children and adults matters to me. The practice of reading aloud and being read to aloud animates lives.

One of my favorite celebrations dates back to the first church I served, from the late 1970s into the middle of the 1980s. Friedens United Church of Christ was located in a marginal urban neighborhood within sight of the St. Louis arch. The people of that

congregation celebrated gratitude continuously. Each time they sat down at a table to share anything to eat or drink they tossed some change or perhaps a dollar into a basket on the table. These small contributions acknowledged their joy in being with one another. They did this at church dinners, planning meetings, refreshment times after worship, monthly programs, mid-morning breaks for the quilting group and impromptu gatherings of folks in the building. The funds collected were distributed to a wide array of mission projects. This was a central practice for them of lifting up the giftedness of their life together. They so valued community and hospitality.

Celebrations do not have to be expensive, elaborate or complicated. They are like punctuation marks, which provide a pause acknowledging where we have been, what is important and how we intend to go forward. Playful and serious frameworks for alert engagement in our unfolding lives emerge from celebrations. They highlight the choices we make. All of us are to be celebrants – those who practice and practice again from the core of our lives.

Responding with love to those in need

by James Hutson
Intern, Family Life Ministries
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
of Ann Arbor

Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.

Matthew 25:34–36

I have been homeless.

The circumstances aren’t important, though sometimes those of us blessed with housing or family or shelter seem to focus on “what brought you here.” This often sudden and radical shift in fortunes is irrelevant in the scheme of living as a homeless person. What was before becomes less important than what is right now.

It becomes a cycle, sometimes, that is difficult to break free from. The disdain, despair and desperation that is the daily ebb and flow of being homeless can drag you under, make you distrusting and cause you to seek immediate gratification. After all, you’ve learned that it can all be gone in

an instant, by friend or foe, circumstance or disaster. It doesn’t matter how – it is that specter of hunger, thirst, warmth or sickness that haunts your footsteps; that saps your dreams.

I have been homeless.

Granted, there are “common” reasons some become homeless – drugs and alcohol abuse, bad financial decisions or mental illnesses that are untreated. These are real causes and are as much a part of the homeless community as any other. Unfortunately, society seems to want to make these conditions and diseases the face of homelessness so that when we don’t “take care of the least of these,” we can feel okay about it and shift our eyes away from the humanity suffering in the waves of addiction, hopelessness and haunting dreams. If we can find a reason not to see the humanity trapped in the addiction or circumstances, we feel we can withhold hope and find a reason not to love. But then there are the disenfranchised, the abused, the lost and the wounded who make up the homeless community as well; those who have fallen through the cracks in our social identity... those blindsided by the “lot of life” that has left them with no home, family or ability to care for themselves in a world that demands more and more from its occupants.

Or the “new” face of the homeless: families who just can’t make it on that meager paycheck from the countless part-part-part time jobs that all of the members, from adolescent to adult, take to try to keep shelter above them, food in them and bedding beneath them. It is not something that is easily caged into a neatly-squared box.

We want to throw programs, temporary measures or even financial allocations at this community. They help but they aren’t the only things or even the main thing that we should give to this forgotten community of our fellow brethren. Clothing, shelter, and food

are all necessities, truly, but...

It is that common thing that binds us to one another, in the humanity of our world, which we should give in abundance.

Love.

I was once homeless.

And I live under the threat of being so again, in a world that is more and more driven by financial wealth and fortune than it is by compassion and kindness. But it isn’t that which makes my heart ache for my brethren lying in the

see LOVE, page 9



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Warming Shelters

An estimated 510 individuals in Washtenaw County are in need of winter shelter. In past years, the demand for winter shelter for the housing-insecure exceeded the supply, leaving many individuals without a warm place to stay at night.

To address these very real needs, the community has come together to provide a daytime warming shelter and expand overnight capacity this winter. In addition to the 50 beds at the Delonis Shelter, an Overnight Warming Center will be hosted by three congregations on a rotating basis from January 5 thru March 30 of 2015 from 7 p.m. - 7 a.m., and operated by the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County (SAWC).

Overnight Warming Center participants are required to check in between 7 and 8 p.m. at the Delonis Center, 312 West Huron Street. Individuals will be screened for access to housing resources, then will be bussed to the offsite location. At 7 a.m. each morning, participants will be transported to the Saint Andrew's breakfast program. Participating churches include:

- Bethlehem United Church of Christ
- Crossroads Community Baptist Church
- Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church

The **Daytime Warming Center** will be open 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. each day, and participants will be required to give their name every day they attend to keep track of the community need. The Monday-Friday Daytime Warming Center will be at the churches on a rotation basis, with the Delonis Center operating Saturday and Sunday. Participating churches are:

- Saint Mary's Student Chapel, 331 Thompson St., Ann Arbor (*January*)
- First Congregational Church, 608 E. William St., Ann Arbor (*Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays in February*)
- First Baptist Church, 517 E. Washington, Ann Arbor (*Tuesdays and Thursdays in February*)
- The Lord of Light Lutheran Church/Student Chapel, 801 S. Forest, Ann Arbor (*March*)

"The community has come together to provide a daytime warming shelter and expand overnight capacity this winter."

Generous donors provide winter gear

Your Groundcover News vendors are now easy to spot at night, sporting their reflective hats and neckwear thanks to a generous donation from IllumiNITE, a Massachusetts-based company whose products are sold locally at Ann Arbor Running Company, located at 2755 Oak Valley Drive, and the Ypsilanti Running Company, 126 W. Michigan Avenue.

A devoted group of parishioners from St. Mary's Student Chapel combined their own contributions with discounts from local stores and a boxful of hats and neck gaiters from IllumiNITEs to outfit Groundcover vendors with the gloves, hats and face and neck protection they need to continue their work throughout the winter. We are so blessed!

International Street Paper Vendor Week

by Elizabeth (Lit) Kurtz
Groundcover Vendor #159

One of the most difficult messages to get across to some individuals, it seems, is that Groundcover News vendors are business people. We set goals, have deadlines, and adhere to certain guidelines. An editor checks our submissions to keep standards high, as with any other periodical. The street paper, as we know it, is a concept that did not exist in past decades. The idea behind the original Scotland-based paper was to give those who are unemployable by mainstream standards the means to earn a living while imparting valuable information about economic diversity.

If you happen to get your copy of

Groundcover early in February, you are in the midst of International Street Paper Vendor Week. Yes, we as vendors have a week to be appreciated for the work we do. Like many others, I am proud to be a street paper vendor. Hopefully, more of the public will begin to recognize the role we play and the street paper will be recognized as an integral part of one's well-rounded reading collection.

Street papers, hopefully, bridge the gap between people who are experiencing life differently. Vendors are wonderful entrepreneurs, and hopefully, from February 4-11 and throughout the year all vendors will be respected as being just that.

It is hard to say goodbye

by Rissa Haynes
Groundcover Vendor #8

It's so hard to say goodbye to yesterday. God put very good people in Shawn's life during his last days. Peggy was key. The Bible tells me that friends are friends forever if the Lord is the lord of them, and there is no condemnation if you are in Christ. Shawn Story had many such friends.

Peggy informed me of Shawn's 180-degree turnaround. It was evident when I saw him and spoke to him. He was proud of completing catechism and excited about being presented to his fellows at the Catholic Church and the student ministry at St. Mary's. He really appreciated the love and generosity showered on him.

He was very grateful to Groundcover. It gave him a chance to mingle with some very nice and generous people. God's amazing grace allowed Shawn to take a writing course at the community college and gave him the confidence to write for Groundcover News. He was very proud of that and was an inspiration to me.

During the last conversation I had with Shawn, we talked a lot about his family, of whom he was very proud. We delighted in his mom's delicious pumpkin pie and all the good eating he had during Thanksgiving.

According to Shawn, he and his friend,

Aaron, were like "2 peas in a pocket." I hope Aaron will have the same great experience of God that Shawn did before he leaves this life. We have all done things that were less than perfect, but we can thank God for His grace.

Shawn's bad habits were overlooked before he departed. And I still count him as a friend. He verbalized regret for how he treated Kay and me during those days, but God is good and gives us assurance He'll forgive and cleanse. If confession is made, which Shawn did, God is faithful. Shawn found a way out. For as we learn in Romans 8:1, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, but because of His great mercy do we have hope.

I love God for putting Shawn Story in my life from 2009-2012. He was there for me when no one else was, even my family. He reminded me a lot of my Uncle Charles – he joked, he laughed, he talked just like Uncle Charles, and that's how he got his nickname, "Cuz."

For Shawn Story, then, let's say, "I love you, Shawn." He has motivated me, and I love the Lord for his omniscience, omnipotence and loving kindness. I will see you later, Shawn, I know. A friend is a friend forever if the Lord is the lord of them. A friend will not say "never" because the welcome is without end. It is so hard. I let to you go into the Father's hand; but we know that a lifetime is not too long to live as friends.

Honoring Shawn & helping others

Shawn Story was a valued and unforgettable member of the Ann Arbor community. Many of you knew him as a Groundcover News contributor and vendor, whose infectious smile always brightened the day of passersby near the post office and Farmers Market.

What some of you may not have been aware of was that Shawn struggled with serious health issues, which unfortunately led to his sudden death in December of 2015. This is a loss not only for our community, but especially for Shawn's family. Shawn was com-

mitted to education and was helping to cover school costs for his five nieces and nephew.

To honor his legacy, my husband and I are creating the **Shawn Story Memorial Scholarship Fund**. Please help us keep Shawn's spirit alive by making a contribution to cover education costs for his nieces and nephew, by visiting www.gofundme.com/ShawnAnnArbor.

Thank you for your help,
Rowena and Luke Norman

Send a vendor to Seattle for the street papers conference

Before his untimely passing, Shawn Story was passionate about becoming a writer. He sought out tutoring to fill literacy gaps and was looking forward to attending writing development sessions at this summer's International Network of Street Papers (INSP) conference, to be held in Seattle.

One way to honor Shawn's memory is to **donate in his honor to the INSP scholarship fund** that will help key vendors and volunteers make the trip to Seattle and attend the conference. To do so, utilize the DONATE button on our website (www.groundcovernews.org), or make out a check to Groundcover News and put INSP or Shawn in the memo line and mail it to us at 423 S. Fourth Ave, Ann Arbor, MI, 48103. Thank you!

Will 2015 bring justice and equality for all the LGBT community?

by Angie Martell
Groundcover Contributor

While 2014 brought many successes for the LGBT community nationally, here in Michigan there were very few. On a national level, currently 36 states and the District of Columbia, and more than 10 tribal nations, recognize gay marriage. The United States Department of Labor issued a rule in July to protect employees of federal contractors from discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. The Department of Education issued a ruling in April that stated that, under Title IX, a school "must treat transgender students consistent with their gender identity in all aspects of the planning, implementation, enrollment, operation, and evaluation of single-sex classes."

For the LGBT community in Michigan, however, 2014 was a difficult year. Over 300 marriages performed legally here during the window of opportunity created by a federal court's overturning of the Michigan Marriage Amendment remained in limbo. Michigan refuses to recognize all legitimate out-of-state gay marriages and refuses to recognize the children conceived of those marriages.

Unfortunately, this past fall's Sixth Circuit decision upheld bans on same-sex marriage in all four states in its region (Michigan, Kentucky, Ohio, and Tennessee). The Sixth Circuit was the first and only Circuit Court of Appeals to uphold the gay marriage ban.

On the state civil rights front, once again the Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Act was not amended. Lawmakers in Lansing sought to divide the LGBT community by throwing a bone to gays and lesbians, and leaving transgender people out in the cold by implying that

they would pass the bill for sexual orientation but not gender identity. Portions of the state's business community, however, lined up in support of the Amendment, citing the loss of talent to the state because of the state's bigoted stance. Michigan's Medicaid and health exchange plans still have discriminatory transgender exclusions.

All eyes are on the U.S. Supreme Court to see how it will decide the gay marriage cases before it. It is expected that one or more of the Sixth Circuit cases will be argued before the court as early as April 2015. However, my prediction is that a decision will not be likely until the end of the June 2015 term.

What is forgotten from the marriage debate is that women were deprived of equal access in marriage for centuries, slaves were prohibited from contracting legal marriages, and blacks and whites could not marry each other until 1967, when the United States Supreme Court decided on the interracial marriage case, *Loving v. Virginia*.

Even when gay marriage is allowed in all 50 states, the LGBT roadway will still be treacherous. In 2015, we might see a narrowing of rights and a rise of religious exemptions. We have already seen a rise of proposed conscience or religious exemptions. These exemptions gained ground after the Supreme Court's Hobby Lobby Ruling, which held that the arts and crafts chain and other closely-held private businesses could opt out of providing employees the free contraceptive coverage required by the Affordable Care Act.

We will also probably see a rise of hate crimes. We will probably see a rise of bullying, not only for LGBT individuals but also for their children and those perceived as LGBT. We will likely see a rise of homophobia, transgender discrimination, and bisexual invisibility

– unless we all change the landscape together.

The time has come where we can no longer stand by idly and watch the face of injustice as we see and live it each day. The time has come to put an end to the harsh realities gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people face in one of the most powerful countries in the world. The time has come to end the tyranny of bigotry.

The time has come to hold to the promises under the United States Constitution, not the amended constitutions of states that support bigotry. The time has come to lift America up to its ideals by our Constitution's own words:

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

The time has come for this perfect union to include *all* the citizens of the United States of America.

Although the U.S. Constitution clearly separates church and state, religious leaders and their thoughts heavily influence every aspect of its laws and of society's moral decision-making. When

a state like Michigan, through its laws or the intentional absence thereof, deliberately deprives a group of LGBT people their rights, it not only discriminates against LGBT people but also contributes to and perpetuates state-sanctioned homophobia and second-class status. It has effectively created a "social homophobia" where some may fear that being identified as gay would be morally wrong.

All people should be allowed to marry, have a family, be able to protect their family, hold a job, rent a home, and live and love without discrimination. LGBT inclusion is not just discrimination protections for employment, housing, and public accommodation, but must also include protections under hate crime statutes. It must allow for a same-sex couple to be adoptive parents to a child, afford the opportunity to have a same-sex partner covered on health and other insurance policies, and allow transgender individuals the ability to live their lives full-time, authentically, in the gender role that is consistent with their gender identity.

Let's be frank: many of our laws make no sense. Why do we need a gender marker on our driver's licenses? Does one's sex impede the ability to drive? Why do we need gender markers on our legal documents? Why can't a child have two moms or two dads?

see EQUALITY, page 11



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Interview with Sir Richard Branson: hotels on the moon

This interview was conducted by International Network of Street Paper's former editorial assistant, Amy MacKinnon, in Oct. 2013.

Amy MacKinnon: I understand you were only 16 when you founded Virgin Group – what was that like?

Richard Branson: Thrilling. I actually started *Student* magazine at 16, as we wanted to give young people a voice on the big issues of the day. We actually founded Virgin a year or so later as we saw a music industry that needed shaking up, and went into that. We were trying to change things for the better and make a difference in people's lives; that's an exciting thought and has been our guiding motivation for the last 43 years.

AM: What motivates you and where do you get all of your energy from?

RB: Motivation can come from many different places. At this stage of my life so much of my time and effort is focused on our not-for-profit foundation, Virgin Unite, which helps so many people. There's also so many exciting projects going on in our businesses; the thought of going to space with Virgin Galactic certainly helps get me out of bed in the morning!



Sir Richard Branson, Virgin Group chairman and Virgin Mobile Canada founder, speaks during a news conference announcing the Canadian launch of a 2-day music festival in Toronto from September 9, 2013, fashioned after Virgin's festivals in England. Photo: REUTERS/Hans Deryk

AM: How is Virgin Galactic progressing? Will you be heading into space soon?

RB: It has been an amazing journey to date, as we are truly being pioneers in this field. We have built an incredible team over the last few years and now feel that we're in a very good position. If all goes according to plan we should be in space next year; that's when we look to the next goal. I'd love to see a Vir-

gin hotel on the moon in my lifetime; there's so much we can achieve now that these foundations have been laid.

AM: What do you think are the most pressing issues facing the world today?

RB: One of the issues that I have spent a lot of time debating is international drug policy. The war on drugs has

been an utter disaster and the sooner it is brought to an end, the better. If a member of my family was to suffer a drug problem, I'd want them to receive medical help and treatment, not a prison sentence.

AM: In June 2011 you guest-edited the *Big Issue South Africa*. What are your thoughts on the street paper model, and how can it make a difference?

RB: A great deal of good has come out of the street paper projects. For a start, having run a publication myself with *Student* magazine, I have a great deal of appreciation for the process. The fact that it has helped so many people is wonderful – street paper projects in 40 countries across the world offer some amazing reach and global impact.

AM: We see street paper vendors as small business people – this is perhaps best summed up by the *Big Issue UK's* motto, "A hand up not a hand out." They buy their stock – the magazine – out of their own money and it's then up to them to sell it at a profit. What advice would you give to small business people starting out?

RB: To make a difference in people's

see SIR BRANSON, page 10

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Taxes – a dirty word... according to Big Biz

by Martin Stolzenberg
Groundcover Contributor

Big corporations are picking your pocket.

Former Labor Secretary Robert Reich put it aptly when he said that lost tax revenue “has to be made up by you and me and every other taxpayer who can’t afford high-flying attorneys and accountants to shift our income into places with low taxes.”

In other words, we are all paying to subsidize the profits of major corporations. It should make you angry to think about it; every dollar of taxes that big business avoids paying is made up for by you and me.

We are aware that corporations are becoming more like human beings every day. Nowadays every dollar is entitled to a vote, just like a person. That is because the Supreme Court ruled in 2014 that corporations can make unlimited political donations. Further, corporations have religious rights, as the Court ruled in 2014 that a corporation has a moral right to deny paying for employee contraceptive devices if it goes against some deep-seated religious belief.

Everyone knows the old saying attributed to Ben Franklin: *The only things you can be sure of are death and taxes.* However, those human qualities that corporations cherish stop at the door when it comes to paying taxes. It is as if corporations are saying, *No thanks, that’s one honor people have that we’ll do without.*

They have been getting away with it for years. They do this through countless loopholes that Congress created. Take a look and you’ll see that the United States corporate tax rate of 39 percent is higher than any other industrialized country. Except that is only a hypothetical number. In reality, because of various tax schemes and dodges, in 2013 the average corporation paid 12.6 percent in taxes, not 39 percent, according to the General Accounting Office.

Historically, it was a different story. “As a percent of tax revenues, corporate taxes have fallen to nine percent from more than 30 percent in the 1950s,” according to a 2013 article in *The New York Times*.

Let’s look at one company’s record for paying taxes in recent years: General Electric (G.E.), because the General is one of our largest corporations and because it is amongst the most egregious companies in “getting away with it.”



And how much does G.E. send over to Uncle Sam every year?

Nothing. In fact, G.E. usually accrues a tax credit, meaning the government owes it money, which can be applied against future profits. Not to worry, those profits never show up.

How has G.E. been able to achieve these astounding results? David Kosieniewski, in a 2011 article in *The New York Times*, explains it thusly: “Over the last decade, G.E. has spent tens of millions of dollars to push for changes in taxes, from more generous depreciation schedules on jet engines to ‘green energy’ credits for its wind turbines. But the most lucrative of these measures allow G.E. to operate a vast leasing and loan business abroad with profits that face little foreign taxes and no American taxes as long as the money stays abroad.”

G.E. is rumored to have over 1,000 employees just in its tax department. Can you imagine a vast sea of office desks all manned by baby-faced Ebenezer Scrooges? G.E. isn’t the only one. The list of federal tax non-payees includes such stalwarts as: Apple, Google, Facebook, Starbuck, Merck, General Motors, Wal-Mart, Ryder, Duke Electric and Verizon.

Now, about those lobbyists – the people who circle around Washington, D.C. so successfully soliciting tax breaks for their corporate clients. Why don’t we do something to make most of them go away?

Lobbyists are not going anywhere. That is a fundamental right – so fundamental, in fact, that it is protected in the First Amendment to our Constitution. You see, our Founding Fathers were extremely ticked off at King George III because he wouldn’t hear their grievances – not surprisingly – about unfair taxes that they had to pay.

So the very first thing they sought to do in drawing up the Bill of Rights in the Constitution was to guarantee freedom of speech to deal with this issue. Nothing would “prohibit the petitioning for a governmental redress of grievances.”

So the very idea of those lobbyist folks can be considered sacred. They’re not going away or being limited in the next thousand years or so. All those tax loopholes are a result of the number of lobbyists having grown from 63 in the 1968 to over 32,000 in 2014.

How many of them lobby for the people? No number is readily available, but you can bet it’s not more than one or two percent of the total. But as Hubert Humphrey once said, “The President is the lobbyist for the people.” You can only keep your fingers crossed that this is so.

Now, about those tax credits from profits on earnings that are made abroad. This is a global economy, and many large companies make billions abroad. The kicker is, they don’t have to pay any taxes on this money unless they bring it into the U.S. In fact, according to a 2014 *CNN Opinion* article, over \$2 trillion

are parked off-shore. They keep the money stashed away overseas waiting for a weak moment when Congress will grant a tax amnesty to those potentially imported dollars. Then they’ll all jump on board and whisk their dollars back home. You can rest assured that those lobbyists are constantly whispering sweet nothings to Congress about doing just that.

Where are these tax havens? U.S. companies filed the largest profits in the Netherlands, Bermuda, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Cayman Islands, Switzerland, Singapore, the Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands, Cyprus, the Netherlands Antilles, and Barbados. Corporations only paid an average of seven percent on their profits in 2010 in these places.

So how do the corporations justify their humungous tax breaks? Corporate spokespeople talk about the high tax rate in the United States, omitting that they don’t pay that rate. They claim that they are already taxed by the nations where they earn the money, so it is unfair to tax them twice. That has some validity to it, though they often avoid taxes abroad, as well. Further, it is deemed their “Fiduciary responsibility to their shareholders to maximize profits by any legally allowed means, including avoiding taxes,” according to *CNN Opinion*.

Don’t think for a moment that Republicans are the only ones looking for corporate giveaways. “Democrats are not far behind. There are many differences between the two main political parties as far as social issues and government management are concerned. However, you can be sure that both parties are well-oiled machines when it comes to taking from the special interests,” according to a 2006 article in *The People’s Lobbyist*.

Senator Tom Coburn of Oklahoma said in May, 2013 that “An individual’s or corporation’s tax rate shouldn’t be dependent on their ability to hire a tax lobbyist. We’d be better off with a code that eliminated these loopholes so we can lower rates for corporations and individuals.”

What is to be done about this mess? The tax code has to be rewritten. Both major political parties agree to that. But when the notion of changing corporate taxes comes up, it usually segues into discussions on changing the entire tax code – including consumer taxes. The next thing you know, the discussion becomes so complex it simply dissolves into thin air.

see TAXES, page 11

Sudoku ★★★★★☆ 4puz.com

7	8		1	6				
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Fill in the squares so that each row, column, and 3-by-3 box contain the numbers 1 through 9.

Cryptoquote

SM GJFIPMSASMP LKJ KBONMSLQ
IX IBG XJWWIR ZJSMP, RJ CNQ
IBGTJWHJT LKJ KSPKJTL LGSZBLJ.
– LKBGPIIU ONGTKNWW

Clue: (Upside down) W=O

Groundcover Vendor Code

While Groundcover News is a nonprofit organization and newspaper vendors are considered contracted self-employers, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper.

The following list is our Vendor Code of Conduct, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our County.

All vendors must agree to the following code of conduct:

- Groundcover News will be distributed for a voluntary donation of \$1, or the face value of the paper. I agree not to ask for more than face value or solicit donations by any other means.
- I will only sell current issues of Groundcover News.
- I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to panhandle, including panhandling with only one paper.
- I will wear and display my badge when selling papers.
- I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover News Staff and will not sell

to or buy papers from other Groundcover News vendors, especially vendors who have been suspended or terminated.

- I agree to treat all customers, staff and other vendors respectfully. I will not "hard sell," threaten, harass or pressure customers, staff, or other vendors verbally or physically.
- I will not sell Groundcover News under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover News but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover News and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.
- I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover News.
- I understand to refrain from selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.
- I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor. I will also abide by the Vendor corner policy.

If you see any Groundcover News vendors not abiding by the code of conduct, please report the activity to:
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Go to www.Printable-Puzzles.com for hints and solutions!

Puzzle ID: #V790GG

Across

- Beyond suggestive
- Bowie's last stand
- Skin problem
- Stew
- Capacitance unit
- Not real close
- Toothpaste brand
- Shakespearean traitor
- Ready to burst
- Perfumes
- Wound seriously
- They need lifts
- High-tech in-box item
- The last of 12
- Makeup name
- Certain noncoms
- Soul singer James
- Kind of gasket
- Rightist
- Kweisi Mfume is its pres.
- Octo plus one
- Coal box
- Domicile doubled
- Coast Guard rank
- Smite
- Conversational
- French coronation city
- "To every thing there is a season" Bible book: Abbr.
- Test-taker's tool
- Traditional learning
- "___hooks"
- Magic word beginning
- Holy women: Abbr.
- Lab heaters
- Sky blight

Down

- Singers Reed and Rawls
- Big name in scat
- E. German champion figure skater
- Bucks
- Spot for SAC

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62				63			64	65				
66				67						68		
69				70						71		

- Tutelary god
- Highlight at the opera
- Tennis ace Wilander
- West Texas city named by Russians
- Having the most precipitation
- Make ___ (mug)
- More prudent
- ___ Perot
- Allan-___
- Cardiology charts, briefly
- "___ Lonesome I Could Cry": B.J. Thomas hit
- Montreal measures
- Sir Anthony
- Prefix for physics
- Official record
- River around the Ile de la Cite
- Medicinal plants
- TV camera screen
- Shipshape
- New Year's Eve song word
- Hero with a vulnerable heel
- Robt. E. Lee's title
- ___ stick (bouncing toy)
- Do it on ___ (accept challenge)
- Confuse or upset, in slang
- Coyote cousins
- Joyce and James biographies
- France's tobacco pioneer
- Holy, to Henri
- "y" ending, in superlative form
- Late San Francisco columnist Herb
- Long-range nuke
- Spanish artist Joan
- Refined waste
- Superhelix material
- Mailing ctrs.



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Sunday school at 10:15 am
Fellowship Hour follows each service

Upcoming Community Events

- Feb. 6 (Friday) Sauerkraut Supper, 6-7:30 pm**
Tickets available at door or 734-665-6149 (\$12 Adults & \$5 for 10 and under)
- Feb. 7 (Saturday) Bethlehem Bridges Concert Series**
Arianne Abela's Doctoral recital - 4:00 pm
Choral works with chorus & small orchestra.
- Feb. 14 (Saturday) German Pretzel Sales, 10:30 am-12 noon**
\$1 each or \$10 dozen
- Feb. 14 (Saturday) Bethlehem Bridges Concert Series**
Elm City Girl's Choir from New Haven CT, 12 pm
Rebecca Rosenbaum, Conductor
- Feb. 17 (Tuesday) Mardi Gras Hops & Hallelujahs**
Downtown Worship, 6 pm
Conor O'Neill's, Main St.
- Feb. 18 (Wed.) Ash Wednesday Worship 12pm & 7pm** (Imposition of ashes also available 6-8 am)
- Feb. 27 (Friday) German Pretzel Sales, 11 am-2 pm, \$1 or \$10 doz.**



www.bethlehem-ucc.org
www.youtube.com/user/BethlehemChurchA2
www.facebook.com/bethlehemucca2
www.pinterest.com/bethlehemucca2

Responding with love to those in need

continued from page 3

coldness of a Michigan winter; it is those few verses in the Bible that drive my faith and define my humanity. It is what drives me to serve my fellow humanity in whatever way I can.

I can remember, in those days of constant movement and gleanings what little was given to survive, those who, in the heart of compassion and the commandment of their God, gave me shelter on a cold and chilling day for a moment or two, fed me a meal when I was hungry and gave me clothing when my own were riddled with holes and decay. Not because they felt sorry for me but because they wanted to give me hope, to sustain me as we sought together a better solution to the situation, a more permanent way to ensure my provisioning of food and shelter, and to walk the journey with me until I could once again stand on my own. Or stay with me even if that day would never come. Because they wanted me to know I was loved.

Because of hope, love and compassion, the greatest of which is love.

When we strip away the dressings of this world; the big homes, the fancy cars and the colorful clothing – when we look with the simplistic wonderment of our eyes upon each other with compassion, truth and love – we become more aware of the depth of this community called humanity, this event called life and we are moved by the echo of our hearts to live that hope together with intent and reason; with love; in dignity and respect that is the basic right of every human being.

I am driven to be part of the ministry to those among us that are homeless (or almost homeless) or even just in need, because of a simple truth: We are all made in God's image, the best and the worst of us. If we allow the circumstances that have come our way to define who we are, and how we treat each other, we are destined to be nothing more than a society of haves and have-nots that fight for possessions and domination over our brothers and sisters. We lose the very thing that makes us formed in the image of God:

Love.

For if you are hungry but I deny you food, if you are thirsty and I refrain from giving you drink, if you are a stranger and I do not extend my hand in friendship, if you are naked and I ridicule your lack of dignity, if you are ill and I withhold life-sustaining healing, or you have committed crimes and I have not given you forgiveness, I do not honor those who, in my moments of despair, discomfort and need, stepped into my life to offer compassion and hope, or (for me) my God, who gave His only begotten Son for my salvation and tells me if I am not loving, I do not know my Father in heaven, because He is love.

And that is the ultimate way to preach the Gospel – to emulate the One who made me.

"But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."
John 3:21



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Out of the shadows: new County ID program coming soon

by Renna Ayyash
U-M Student Contributor

By the end of spring, all Washtenaw County residents will be able to get an official County ID. On November 19, 2014, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution that will create a county-wide ID program in order to provide a government-issued ID for those who experiencing difficulty obtaining a Michigan driver's license or state identification card.

The Washtenaw ID Project (WIP) will serve as an aid for obtaining identification, particularly for those of marginalized communities – including the recently incarcerated, the elderly, people experiencing homelessness, the poor, and the mentally disabled. Compared to traditional state-issued IDs, meeting the eligibility criteria to verify identity for the Washtenaw ID Project is much easier because a Social Security Card or birth certificate will not be required.

Instead, the WIP will grant identification based on a point system which can be fulfilled by several documents. Points are given to several different forms of identification, and 300 are needed to get an ID. Points increase in value as the reliability of the document increases. While birth certificates and driver's licenses are accepted and have a high point value, they are not required. Among other documents the WIP will accept are school records, employer IDs, school IDs, letters from the court, tax records, and an affidavit from an acquaintance. They will also accept foreign documents and expired documents.

Applicants must also provide evidence

of residence in Washtenaw County – a place of habitation for 15 of the last 30 days. However, this will not exclude those experiencing homelessness, because the WIP will also accept a letter from a shelter or other social service agency.

The ID will cost \$25 and will ensure recognition to Washtenaw County residents, allowing them to connect to public safety, civic and community services. It will display the photo, name, date of birth, address, height, weight, eye color and signature of the cardholder.

This initiative was started in 2012 by Keta Cowan, the CEO of Synod Community Services. Synod is a non-profit organization that helps address the problems of marginalized communities, particularly by offering supportive housing. Though they do a lot of work housing individuals, Cowan wanted to address other basic needs that were not being met for community members.

Cowan recognized identification as a problem because there are so many road blocks to obtaining one, and without one you cannot participate in many community and other services. Without an ID, you cannot vote, open a bank account, prove identity for employment or get a library card, among other things. Those without identification are basically living in the shadows of society. Because of the necessity of having an ID, Cowan wanted to make it easier to obtain.

Cowan started by calling the Washtenaw Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights. She was put into contact with Janelle Fa'ola, who was then an intern at the organization. Since then,

they have been a strong team, doing almost all the groundwork for the project themselves.

The team first proposed the idea to the Washtenaw Board of Commissions, who responded positively to the idea, and from there the Washtenaw County ID Task Force was created. This task force began meeting and researching solutions to the problem of people not having ID cards.

They decided that, since Ann Arbor exists as a metropolitan area, a county-wide ID program made the most sense. They also started meeting with law enforcement, because one of the main problems people without ID encounter is detainment by law enforcement due to unverified identification. They needed to make sure law enforcement agencies would accept the type of ID they were planning on creating, so they started meeting one-on-one with all the law enforcement jurisdictions, the majority of whom expressed confidence in the idea.

With that encouragement, Cowan and Fa'ola began meeting with libraries, banks, and other human service organizations to determine if they, too, would accept this sort of ID. This groundwork took place from 2012 up until 2014.

In 2014, the pair began to go directly to the Washtenaw County commissioners to gauge whether or not the Board would vote for a resolution to pass an ID program. Though many were optimistic, the commissioners challenged Cowan and Fa'ola to provide research about where the IDs would be accepted. By studying Michigan's laws, Cowan learned what criteria needed to be met

by an ID in order to be considered valid for different operations. In addition to being accepted by the public entities they had already met with, she learned that the Washtenaw County ID would be acceptable to verify eligibility to buy alcohol, cigarettes, and travel on Amtrak and Greyhound. The County ID, however, will not be sufficient to travel by airplane.

Cowan and Fa'ola also established connections with the University of Michigan in 2014 in order to further their project. They are working with the School of Social Work, the School of Information, and the School of Public Health. In addition to making students aware of their program, the schools have expressed interest in working on information campaigns and forming intern groups to help strengthen the program's base. There has not been coordination between Synod and Eastern Michigan University or Washtenaw Community College, but Cowan and Janelle are very open to future collaboration with them.

Synod hopes to make these IDs available by April or May of this year. Synod is working on developing an ID clinic that will operate out of the County Clerk's office. It is also working on developing a scholarship fund to help those who are not able to pay the \$25 fee. These scholarships will be awarded on a need basis.

To learn more about the Washtenaw ID Project, visit www.washtenawid.com/home.

To learn more about Synod Community Services, visit beta.synodhelps.org.

Sir Richard Branson: hotels on the moon

continued from page 6

lives. Research the market you are entering and make sure you set yourself apart from the competition. You have to give people a reason to use your product or service; there are so many industries that are still ripe for improvement – if you manage to pinpoint them then you have a golden opportunity to disrupt things.

AM: The title of your latest book, *Screw Business as Usual*, seems to be becoming a motto of yours. What do you mean by this?

RB: Many businesses are too afraid

of taking a risk these days, so many choose to play it safe. While we all need accountants. I'm not particularly keen on their involvement at the start of a business; you need to be brave with your ideas and make a statement. Common sense and gut instinct will get you a long way.

AM: You've achieved a phenomenal amount – from world-record attempts to space exploration, and I count 84 businesses listed as part of the Virgin Group on your website. What is the next frontier for you, for your company?

RB: We have some truly thrilling plans in the pipeline. Our plan for Virgin Galactic is to create a pioneering and successful business and to kickstart a new industry which could come to define the 21st century in the same way that commercial aviation defined the century before. The launching of satellites into space could enable us to do so much, from reducing solar radiation on earth to providing humanitarian assistance.

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Taxes – a dirty word...

continued from page 7

If one were to take a piecemeal approach to the problem, the most likely occurrence – probably the area that deserves the first cut – is corporate taxes for overseas investments. It is so blatantly unfair, it can be viewed as “low-hanging fruit” in the battle over unfair taxation.

To tackle this problem, an approach called the “territorial system” proposed by business lobbyists and cited in 2011 by Robert Pozen, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in the *Bloomberg View*, seems to make sense. It essentially agrees that there should *not* be double-taxation of earnings by a United States company in a foreign country and here, as well.

So companies operating in countries with a tax rate of 20 percent or higher – a reasonable rate – would be excluded from such taxation in the United States,

except for a five percent administrative charge. But in those tax havens where the tax rate is under 20 percent, companies would pay a tax equal to 20 percent minus the prevailing tax rate in that country. Plus, there would be a five percent administrative charge here, as well.

For example: if a company made a profit of \$100 million in a country which collected \$2 million or two percent in taxes on that income, the corporation would pay \$18 million to the IRS in taxes for that year plus five percent. You can just hear the *cha-ching* of the IRS cash register over that one.

If that were done, corporate lawyers would be swamped bringing all those investments and jobs back to the United States, where they rightfully belong. And, then the Supreme Court would be right to say, *Corporations are for all intents and purposes like people. They even pay their fair share of taxes.*

“They have been getting away with it for years. They do this through countless loopholes that Congress created.”

Equality for the LGBT community?

continued from page 5

Why are we surprised at the high rate teenagers committing suicide because they were gay or believed to be gay by their peers? What were the schools doing to protect these kids? In many places in America, schools are actually legally forbidden from providing gay and transgender kids with the support they need to be empowered enough to accept their sexuality and deal with bullying.

Discrimination impacts families. Discrimination impacts communities. Discrimination impacts Michigan’s economy. Many people have already left Michigan to raise their children and to feel safer and equal.

Let us – Gay, Straight, Bisexual, Transgender, Two Spirit, Black, White, Native American, Latino, Asian, Homeless – all refuse be marginalized or allow others to be marginalized and live in the shadows. Let us refuse to live in the shadow of fear and doubt. Let us refuse to believe in or be relegated to a caste system where we are second-class citizens, where employers can fire or refuse to hire people, landlords can

deny housing, and business owners can refuse restaurant service based on an individual’s actual or perceived protected classes, including sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. Let us refuse to believe and live in a world where we are told there are no means of legal redress. Let us refuse to be told where we can live in this great nation we call “America, land of the free and home of the brave.”

Let us not be complicit in our silence. I am reminded in these times of the words of the German anti-Nazi Lutheran pastor, Friedrich Niemöller:

*First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out –
Because I was not a Socialist.*

*Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out –
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.*


*Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out –
Because I was not a Jew.*

Then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me.



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In recognizing the humanity of our fellow beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute.

– Thurgood Marshall

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70	S	T	E	S	E	T	N	A	S	S	M	O



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Lemony Green Beans



Photograph by Jeremy Keith.

by **Karen Vigomstad**
Peoples Food Co-op Outreach and Education Coordinator

This delicious recipe is adapted from *Kalyn's Kitchen* and *Moosewood Restaurant Simple Suppers*.

Ingredients

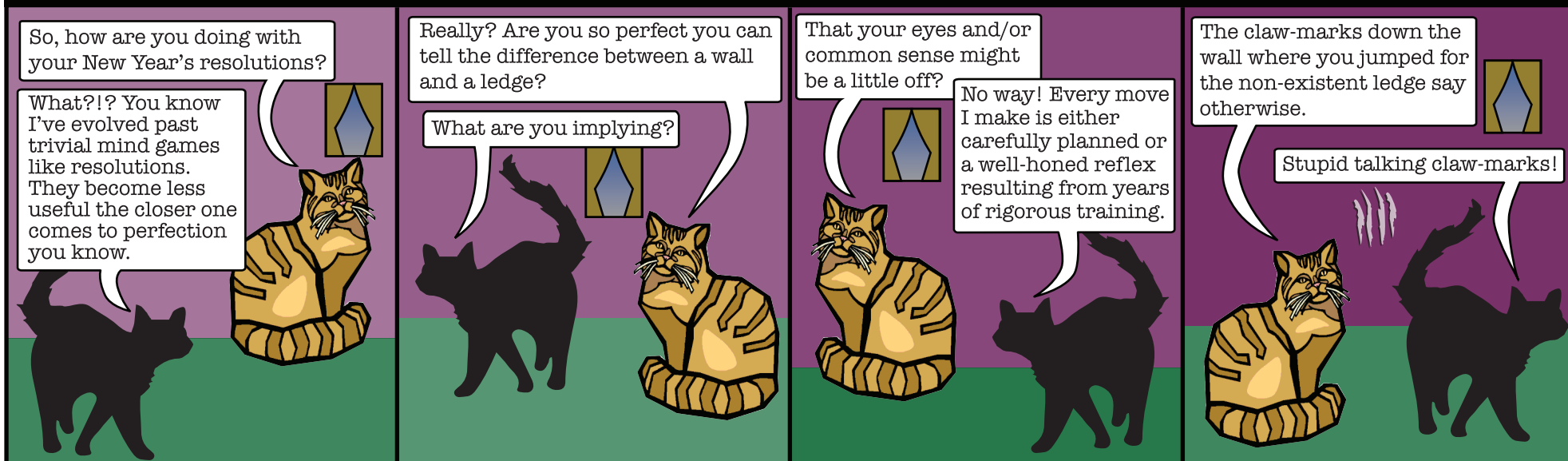
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 lb. fresh green beans, both ends trimmed
- One large lemon (for lemon zest and lemon juice)
- 1½ tablespoon olive oil
- Salt and fresh ground black pepper, to taste

Directions

1. Fill a medium-sized saucepan half-full with water, add salt and bring to a boil. Add beans and reduce heat to a simmer for about 5 minutes, or until they are barely tender.
2. Zest and juice the lemon while beans simmer.
3. When beans are ready, drain into a colander.
4. Return pan to stove and heat the olive oil. When the oil is hot, add the beans, lemon juice and most of zest. Season to taste with salt and freshly-ground black pepper. Cook for another couple of minutes until lemon flavor incorporates with the olive oil and beans.
5. Put beans in serving dish then sprinkle with remaining lemon zest.

Serves 3 to 4.

Strange (but Mostly True) Stories About a Mother and her Daughter • Cy Klone © 2014



So, how are you doing with your New Year's resolutions?

What?!? You know I've evolved past trivial mind games like resolutions. They become less useful the closer one comes to perfection you know.

Really? Are you so perfect you can tell the difference between a wall and a ledge?

What are you implying?

That your eyes and/or common sense might be a little off?

No way! Every move I make is either carefully planned or a well-honed reflex resulting from years of rigorous training.

The claw-marks down the wall where you jumped for the non-existent ledge say otherwise.

Stupid talking claw-marks!